

## **We Can Do It: A New Way of Looking at Tribal Messiahship**

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The We Can Do It workshop, a two-day transformational experience, is designed to change the way we think about tribal messiahship. It was born out of careful study of True Parents' teachings, my personal life journey, my experience as a pastor and now as the director of Evangelism at the Family Federation headquarters in the United States.

### **My background**

I joined the church in 1974 as a one-year old with my mother. It was a very challenging time; my father did not have a good experience with church leaders, so he did not join. Because my mother was a full-time missionary, she was advised to find someone to care for me. My father took me and raised me outside of the church for twenty years.

My father loved and protected me, and because of his bad experiences, he raised me to fear the church. Over the years, he cited many examples of misconduct and even introduced me to "deprogrammed members" in an effort to reveal the dangers of the unification movement. For twenty years, I went through anti-Unification Church training. I was also blocked from seeing my mother. Nonetheless, I searched for the truth about life. I could sense we were living in a time when new truth would be revealed, and I knew I would find it.



### **Meeting True Parents**

After time spent in England and Italy, in 1995, I came back to America to find the truth about my origins. Both my mother and my uncle spoke about True Parents and the Divine Principle with me. All of a sudden, my whole life made sense. Studying the Divine Principle was like drinking fresh water in a desert. I instantly accepted all parts of it as true. I was proud that my mother had sacrificed her son to

serve True Parents, and because of that, I felt my life had greater value.

On God's Day 1996, in the New Yorker Hotel's Grand Ballroom, I saw True Parents for the first time. True Father's manner and his sermon that day amazed me. Immediately, I could understand why so many people feared him and spread false stories about him; yet I just sat there thinking, This is the coolest guy I've ever seen. Nevertheless, I understood I was embarking on a journey that would result in a long time passing before I would be able to reconcile with my father and all the other people I had left behind.

Thanks to True Parents, I was blessed to Yumiko Sakamoto in 1997. We now have three children. After many experiences around the world, in 2011 we moved to Las Vegas, where we bought a house directly next door to True Parents' house, Cheon Hwa Gung. Within three months, I was privileged to become the local pastor.

### **Pastoring a church**

There were some challenging times ahead for our movement. The leadership and structure were changing, and many members had questions about our future. Despite the deep faith within our blessed families, I noticed how fragile we were as an organization at that time.

I was also trying to resolve many questions in my heart: Why am I the pastor for these precious members? The majority of them were older than I was, so I used to wonder, Why am I giving sermons? True Father had trained most of these members for years; they know the Divine Principle better than I do and have more experience in the movement than I do.

Unless we are growing and bringing in new members, what are we doing?" Looking back, I know that the inspiration for the We Can Do It workshop was planted at that time.

### **Expanding church membership**

I know that many members study what Christian churches do to be successful and grow. We look at the mega-churches and growing churches to see what we can learn from them, but we often overlook some important differences. First, many churches grow from transference; Christians leave smaller churches for bigger, better churches. For one church that is growing, perhaps four others are closing down. Aside from church growth, an important thing to look at is how many are converting from non-believer to believer, and that number is much small in Christianity today.

Conversion is usually most effective in one-on-one discipling relationships, but most Christian churches do not disciple. Members come on Sunday; they tithe, and then go about their daily lives. It is almost as if the ministry provides a service and the members are customers. In American Christianity, they call this "spiritual consumerism." Reflecting upon this phenomenon, I noticed how we too are susceptible to the same trend. I wondered where the passion of the early days had gone.

I started asking first-generation members why they joined. I must have asked over a thousand members, including leaders from Europe and America. I noticed that none of them joined our organization as it is today. In some sense, they all joined a movement to change the world. None of them joined a church in the conventional sense. None of them joined because of a great Sunday service. Ironically, Sunday used to be our day off, but now the two-hour period on Sunday is the most active time for many members.

### **Working in today's environment**

I started thinking deeply about this. I noticed that in America this trend began when most members started family life in the late 1980s. I also heard from older leaders that we started to organize more as Christian churches do in the 1990s to create good relationships with Christian ministers. Even though True Father spoke frequently about home church and tribal messiahship, we were not successful at it.

### **Reaching "out"**

As I was researching this, I came across something called "missional church" that started in the Anglican Church in England about twenty years ago and is now spreading to the US. The basic concept behind missional church is to bring the church to the people, rather than trying to bring people to the church. Everyone contributes to bringing new members to the community. It turns out that this is one of the most successful conversional-type church growth systems in Christianity.

Missional church practitioners say that if you focus only on coming to church and bringing people into the church, the culture can become self-serving and can lead to spiritual consumerism. They do still meet frequently in large numbers, once or twice a month, but they meet more frequently in each other's homes with an emphasis on reaching out to people that live nearby in one's community. I found many similarities between this approach and the things True Father taught about home church and achieving tribal

messiahship. I became excited to see how brilliantly True Father had been guiding us. He is so advanced. Despite some of our own doubts, others have been applying these principles and bringing results.

### **Assessing the situation**

Many of us have strong opinions about witnessing, but I think acknowledging that not everyone wants to witness in the same manner is important. Based on my research, usually less than 5 percent of members in a community actually want to witness in the conventional way. When held to that standard, those that attempt the conventional methods may end up feeling bad about their own efforts. Furthermore, even if they do bring new guests into the community, members are unsure of the treatment their guests will receive. We never figured out how to transition into a family movement that can witness as families. Naturally, a family is going to witness in other ways. We're going to witness to the people we work with, go to school with, play sports with, ride the bus with, and so on. Tribal messiahship is a much more evolved form of evangelism that not only can but must include all aspects of our lives.

### **Wanting to turn words into substance**

As a pastor, I started giving more sermons and having more discussions about tribal messiahship. Although some members were very active, I noticed that many felt they could not do more than they were already doing. Some were too busy with work and family duties, others felt their family relationships were too unstable to be able to take care of others, some were concerned about problems within the church and many were simply unclear about how to do tribal messiah activities. I wondered how we could encourage our faithful members to achieve tribal messiahship. Surely, this was the biggest missing piece in our movement and even the cause of many of our struggles. As a pastor, I concluded with a simple question, What could be more important to support than blessed families becoming successful tribal messiahs?

My wife and I started a condition with some core members. We would pray on the land in front of Cheon Hwa Gung every morning at 5:00 AM and then do Hoon Dok Hae together in a public place and witness for a short time before starting our day. I was mapping out a one-to-three-year plan to help shift our church culture toward growth through tribal messiah activities. However, it was not long before I was invited to work at the headquarters as the director of Evangelism.

### **Key insights while in Korea**

As my views on tribal messiahship developed, I received a lot of positive feedback from members. Many confirmed these insights from their own experiences. However, it came to a point where I did not want to preach about it without offering the tools to follow through on it. I wanted to apply a process that would support the change to occur on a fundamental level.

At that stage, we went to Korea for the first Global Top Gun Workshop. My team was responsible for designing the structure and education of the workshop. We received a lot of blessing and love from True Mother. I had a number of experiences at Chung Pyung that answered many of the questions I was grappling with. On the third day, God told me not to call it a workshop anymore; to stop using the terminology "teams" and "groups."

I started thinking in terms of tribal messiahship, and I realized that our group at the workshop was the size of a growing tribe. We organized it with the natural terminology for a tribe, such as clans and families. This helped me to understand organization in a more natural sense. It may seem simple, but I felt that it totally changed the atmosphere. What we experience with each other should be the same thing we are promoting to other people, so we need to experience the heavenly kingdom with ourselves first.

### **Application begins**

My experience at Global Top Gun showed me that it was possible to organize hundreds of people; it was possible to lead with purpose and at the same time give people maximum flexibility and freedom to contribute the fullness of their own unique character and creativity.

When you have a common purpose that everybody understands and agrees upon, and when you have a clear structure and continual communication, something magical happens. You start to see God working through everybody in such a beautiful way, and you can learn from each other much more quickly.

I also realized that the concept that we are just building a church limits many of us. At Global Top Gun, we expanded the framework to include everyone's unique talents and abilities that could help build Cheon Il Guk. The purpose of our organization is to build a kingdom through tribes that inherently focus on educating and blessing people, but also to build that kingdom. That means there is a lot of work to do and blessing people is not the only goal. The end goal is to build the kingdom as blessed families.

It occurred to me that to sustain our momentum, we need to work together as a community. I had heard that True Mother encourages church communities to work together as a tribe first, instead of everyone trying on their own. If we want to make this work, I was convinced, we need to do it together. We need to go in as a community in which the pastor and enough of the members are willing to try something new.

### **We can do it!**

Once I returned from Korea, our team immediately began organizing the We Can Do It workshop. The purpose of which is to understand and set meaningful goals for our tribal messiah work in a way that promotes a heavenly culture within our families and the community at the same time. The workshop is an invitation to come together as a tribe, and map out a meaningful and inspiring three-month plan for tribal messiah efforts.

During the three months following the workshop, families meet together regularly in trinities, the leaders of the community are meeting together regularly, and we continue with follow-up support from the national headquarters.

We have to trust that blessed families have more capability, genius and ability to expand True Parents' foundation than we give ourselves credit for. We Can Do It workshops help to pull that out and remind us how much God is already working in our lives. We acknowledge the gifts and talents of our members and find practical ways to contribute to the providential needs of the community.

### **Better as a threesome**

For the trinity to work, it needs to live for something greater than itself. True Father guided us to work in trinities years ago, and I have found that when you do so, a new level of protection arises. There is greater accountability, support as well as more manpower and resources to get things done. It creates an environment where you can exercise and test your ideas, and find relevant ways to love one another and those whom we are reaching out to. This takes a huge burden off the pastor, whom members often expect to do everything. Organizing into trinities and clans is an effective distribution of authority that aligns with a common purpose. Everyone shares in the victory.

### **Love those nearest you first**

In many areas, I felt inspired to help. I want members to feel proud of our faith; to recognize that God has worked in our lives to bring us to True Parents and position us in the providence. I want them to understand that everything starts with love.

The first and most precious member of our tribe is our spouse, our family. To give love within the home and among those we know is already witnessing. Tribal messiahship does not involve individual activity but calls for something we can do as a couple and as a family. I want us to take better care of the people we already know, both inside the church and outside the church. The idea of constantly reaching out to new people on the street, while neglecting those close to us is painful.

### **Aim for the heavens**

I want us to think bigger than building or maintaining a church. God has called us to build the kingdom, and many aspects of society need our love and support. Adopting this perspective encourages us to respect one another's unique gifts and talents. To pursue our passions and contribute to the providence at the same time is possible. The two are not separate. When we act in this way, we will be more relevant in society. These activities naturally contribute to the witnessing environment, because we are actually building the kingdom.

Clearly, this is a paradigm shift. How, then, can we facilitate this type of change? These considerations went into the We Can Do It workshop: We need inspiration, but to be lasting we need transformation as well. We want to give people hope and the theory behind tribal messiahship, but we also want to create experiences for members to feel a shift in their perspective and heart. We have put some of these exercises to facilitate these ends in the workshop.

We want to work together, but we understand that for unity to exist their needs to be a common purpose. In terms of a community, this common purpose needs to be very clear, practical and measurable. When the common purpose is clear, there is greater flexibility. We achieve this by reflecting on True Parents' top priorities and the top priorities of the local community. We then initiate discussion and strategy around some of these issues.

We want members to rally around a clear vision, but in order for the vision to occur we need planning, which needs to be practical. We encourage members to work confidently using their strengths.

We also need determination to pursue this vision, but determination is nothing without goals and accountability. This means setting inspiring goals that are relevant to our area and working together to keep one another accountable. One of the ways we achieve this is to form trinities that meet weekly. The goal is to support one another and find ways to witness and make an impression on society that is most appropriate in each geographical area.

In order to learn and develop, we need communication, but for communication to run smoothly there needs to be a structure. We do this by looking at the community as a tribe. Within the tribe, there are clans, and within each clan, there are trinities. With clear order, clear communication and a reporting system emerges.



### **Introducing the tribe kit**

To support the members both during and after the workshop, we have developed the Tribe Kit, which has four main components: First, there is a small Hoon Dok Hae book that has a collection of excerpts from Cheon Seong Gyeong and Cham Bumo Gyeong. This is a reminder for all tribal messiahs to center their activity on the word. We printed this small book to encourage them to use this in their trinity meetings, on the go.

These excerpts relate to home church and tribal messiah work. Ultimately, we wish to encourage members to get the full set of holy scriptures and base their work on that.

Second, we have a list of resources and on-line tools. We have samples of outreach materials they can custom- order. We have a sampler program, which is a scripted facilitator's guide for the participant to be able to convey the core concepts of the workshop to families that did not attend the workshop.

Third, the handbook is the book that the participants use to go through the workshop. During the workshop, there is a series of exercises, and you can write your answers down in the handbook to refer to once you are done.

Fourth, the planner is something you work with for three months after the workshop. You take it to your weekly trinity meetings, to help you track your goals.

### **Results so Far**

We have held four We Can Do It workshops in North America and have at least six more scheduled within the next few months. Based on personal testimonies, that people feel transformed and empowered is apparent. As a result of the workshop and the three-month commitment, community events have taken place in Hawaii, New Jersey, and the Bay Area, all of which trinities and clans planned and organized.

### **Looking ahead**

We have built a web site with tribal messiah resources and stories at [heavenlytribe.org](http://heavenlytribe.org). Currently we are working on a system for families to be able to share short stories about their activities. Ultimately, we hope to learn from the testimonies of members and see how God is working and guiding us to accomplish

this incredible blessing.

Our goal for 2016 is to have 430 families in America registered and actively doing tribal messiah work -- meeting regularly in their trinities and reporting their activities.

My assessment is simple: If we clarify our vision and purpose and set up a healthy working structure within a community in which we communicate frequently, God will work. We will see God working through our incredible brothers and sisters.

As we become a more successful movement, we will look back and see that we were all a part of that success-- the elders, the young ones -- and yes -- even the people we haven't met yet, because I believe that with True Parents' love and guidance and with our unified creative genius working together toward common goals, we can take over the world as tribal messiahs.



*1 A Japanese woman with an American husband responds to the workshop material.*

*2 Unificationism is a lifetime commitment; that members maintain their desire to fulfill the tribal messiah mission is uplifting.*

*3 About one-third of the members at the workshop were young.*

*4 The US headquarters has embraced the visual age we are living in and record and disseminate vibrant images to encourage members.*

### **Workshop Testimonies**

#### **Sarah Brown**

The workshop was excellent. I had similar ideas about creating a workbook for tribal messiahs before coming to this seminar; it was as if Demian had taken the ideas straight from my head! The materials were helpful and professional and the presentation was insightful, well-designed and portrayed meaningfully. I truly appreciated the emphasis on creating real goals and action steps and wish we could have spent more time on it. I hope all of us will hit the ground running with the rest.

#### **Keiichi Munakata**

It was a very good workshop, and I am grateful to True Parents for guiding us. After the workshop, I feel as if I see things on a different level. Whenever I meet a person, I automatically think, How can this person fit into my tribe?

True Father's speeches have become more meaningful, and I can relate to them more after Demian explained God's global providence all the way down to the individual level.

Demian broke down our focus to the two most important things we can do right now for our community. This allowed our community to come together, to focus on things that are important for the community and to effect greater change by working together. I liked being reminded to practice working together as a tribe before we start our own tribes. In that way, we are able to understand our community better.

### **Bob Gauper**

Demian's enthusiasm and visionary thinking inspired me. My wife and I have been looking over the Tribe Kit. The care and work it must have taken to put it all together impressed us. The vision that the trinity model promotes validates and clarifies some directions in which we already were (tentatively) going. Our first agenda item is the revival of a national Parents' Day event, which we used to do every year. I am grateful for all the effort and positive energy that I saw from the National Ministry Team. These presentations were a breath of fresh air and I hope they spark a revival of evangelical activity in District 11.

### **Margaret Polloi-Sisserson**

The idea of the whole community as a tribe and then small groups as a clan fits the island culture; to actually have a small clan to work with is great. I feel inspired that this clan will develop into a long-lasting neighborhood of friends. This clan is a practical way of navigating, getting support and being empowered to finally be on our own and achieve heavenly tribal messiahship.

### **Clan Leaders After a Month**

*These testimonies from came through a follow-up call a month after the workshop.*

### **Kevin**

The sense of cooperation and follow up by the headquarters moved me. It felt as if the headquarters is really serving the field. To be honest, it usually feels the other way around, but now it feels like a partnership. They are responding to people's needs in the field. They want to help us accomplish what we already want to accomplish.

### **Bento**

Setting targets has helped me a lot. To set a date and a plan for follow up witnessing events was impactful.

### **Michael**

This workshop inspired the members. I have been trying to inspire them for years but it has not been easy. That someone from the headquarters came out to encourage us to do things together is significant. I can definitely see it is the beginning of something new. A shift in thinking is occurring. We now have a focus and purpose. When we get results, it will stimulate the whole community. To have a goal and create objectives is so simple, and so powerful.

### **Wayne**

Forming a trinity and working in a planning atmosphere is beneficial. I am now working with members that I have known for a long time but realize I did not know well. It is so invigorating. We are getting closer to each other. Frankly, just having casual relationships with members is tiring. Being more seriously involved in this brings me into a better relationship with my wife. We are now going in the same direction. This is the first time I have enjoyed witnessing since I joined the church. I am not afraid of being rejected anymore. I am constantly revising my hotlist and meeting new people